

## **Message to Air Traffic Controllers**

Dear Colleagues:

Last July, the Agency and NATCA began contract negotiations, and it was my goal to reach a fully voluntary agreement replacing the one first signed in 1998. We worked very hard to achieve that goal, in fact, resolving most work rules with your union at the table. But after nine months of negotiation, including four weeks of federally supervised mediation, the financial gap between our proposal and NATCA's remained very wide, particularly as to new hire salaries, and could not realistically be closed. So, in accordance with our statute, we then forwarded the parties' final offers to Congress for its review and consideration.

As of June 5<sup>th</sup>, the 60-day period for Congress' review has ended. This means that under the law the FAA may begin putting its proposal into place, which we will do effective today. I am writing to advise you about the agency's plans to implement those successor terms and conditions for the controller workforce.

Details will follow today's announcement, but you should know that it will be several months before all of the successor terms and conditions will be fully implemented. During this period, we will be providing training to the managers and supervisors as well as discussing the phase-in specifics with your union. In the interim, we will transition by using the pay and work rule provisions from the prior contract. While we have tried to anticipate any problems that might arise in implementation, I realize that any transition of this sort will raise unexpected issues, which we will deal with as quickly as we can. There have been several pay transition questions raised to date and we will be responding to these shortly.

Understandably, many of you would have preferred a different outcome in this long and tough process. I, too, was disappointed that an agreement on all articles was not possible. But at this stage, I'd ask you to take a fresh look at the successor terms and conditions on their own merit, setting aside what you may have been told about them during the heat of negotiations. We fully protect the salaries (base pay and locality pay) of all controllers. We also provide for annual government-wide locality increases and annual performance pay (core compensation OSI and SCI). Finally, we protect over 80% of the existing premium pay. Indeed, as these terms take effect, I'm pleased to announce that the agency will be granting a .4% increase to the controller workforce on June 11, 2006, in recognition of the achievement of two of the four SCI metrics during the last performance year.

A great deal has been said about our approach to these negotiations. I can only emphasize, as I have said before, that I have nothing but great respect, admiration and appreciation for the work you do day in and day out to keep the NAS operating safely and efficiently. Going forward, I know the public can count on your continued dedication and professionalism, which you demonstrated during these difficult times.

Marion C. Blakey